

17. (New) A nitride semiconductor laser comprising:

a GaN substrate having a single-crystal GaN layer at least on its surface, said single-crystal GaN layer formed through a lateral-growth process;

a small-crack-preventing layer made of a $\text{Al}_a\text{Ga}_{1-a}\text{N}$ ($0 < a < 0.1$) layer and contacting said GaN substrate, said small-crack-preventing layer having a coefficient of thermal expansion less than that of the GaN substrate thereby providing compression strain on said small-crack-preventing layer;

an n-type cladding layer containing Al;

an active layer containing InGaN; and

a p-type cladding layer containing Al.

18. (New) The nitride semiconductor laser according to claim 17, wherein said n-type cladding layer contains more Al than said small-crack-preventing layer.

19. (New) The nitride semiconductor laser according to claim 17, wherein said small-crack-preventing layer has a thickness of not less than $1\mu\text{m}$.

20. (New) The nitride semiconductor laser according to claim 17, wherein said small-crack-preventing layer has a thickness of 3 to $10\mu\text{m}$.

21. (New) The nitride semiconductor laser according to claim 17, wherein said small-crack-preventing layer has been grown without an impurity doping.

22. (New) The nitride semiconductor laser according to claim 17, wherein an indium gallium nitride layer is intervened between said small-crack-preventing layer and said n-type cladding layer.